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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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### WATER RESOURCES COORDINATING COUNCIL MEETING

**December Meeting.** The Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC) met on December 12, 2017, at the Polk County Extension Office in Altoona. Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey called the meeting to order.

**Point Source Project Update.** Water Quality Coordinator Adam Schnieders of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provided an update on the issuance of point source permits for wastewater plants and industrial facilities. There have been 151 facilities identified as needing permits, of which 118 have had permits issued.

Coordinator Schnieders also reported that he attended the [2017 ACWA Nutrient Permitting Workshop](#) and received information on point source permit processing in other states. The overall goal of the project will be to sponsor a Point Source Permit Summit in Iowa to review the current options for point source permitting as outlined in the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, and to discuss ways to implement or streamline new procedures. This would include developing guidelines for smaller communities.

**Nutrient Reduction Strategy.** Laurie Nowatzke, Measurement Coordinator for the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy at Iowa State University (ISU), provided an update on the 2017 Nutrient Reduction Strategy annual progress report. Highlights from the executive summary include:

- There was \$420.0 million invested in FY 2017 to reduce nutrients. This included expenditures for research, educational presentations, practice implementation, and water quality monitoring. The total included \$243.0 million in payments from the federal Conservation Reserve Program.
- The Iowa Nutrient Research Center has funded over 30 projects, with the focus of evaluating the performance of new technologies and conservation practices.
- Conservation practices in the past have focused on the reduction of phosphorus. This has included the construction of terraces and sediment control basins. To address the reduction of nitrogen, new practices are being implemented using cost-share funding from State and federal programs. The new practices include the installation of bioreactors and nitrate-treating wetlands.
- There were 474 educational and outreach events held in FY 2017, with an estimated 54,000 participants.

**Runoff Risk Tool.** Senior Hydrologist Dustin Goering of the National Weather Service presented information on the development of a [Runoff Risk Decision Support](#) tool, which provides information to farmers on the optimal time to apply fertilizer. Fertilizer runoff can result when there is a heavy rain or melting of snow after fertilizer is applied. The Runoff Risk Decision Support tool relies on weather information from the National Weather Service and develops maps that incorporate forecasted temperatures, precipitation, snowmelt, and soil conditions for the next 10 days. The maps can be reviewed to visualize the risk of fertilizer runoff. The project began in 2008 in the state of Wisconsin to reduce water quality degradation.

**Algal Bloom Study.** Dr. Grace Wilkinson, assistant professor of ecology at ISU, discussed a study conducted on [harmful algal blooms in lakes](#). Algal blooms cause fish kills and increase toxic risks for humans, livestock, and wildlife. The study observed pigments added to lake water to determine if blooms could be anticipated in advance. It was unknown whether lake management could prevent the blooms

once detected. In the study, nutrients were gradually added to the lake until a bloom was triggered, and then the nutrient input was stopped. Stopping the input reversed the bloom, indicating algal blooms could be prevented by reducing nutrient input.

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